

Eldritch by The_Readers_Muse

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Adult Content, Clueless Boys, F/M, First Time, M/M, Multi, Period-Typical Homophobia, Sexual Content, Sexual Tension, Threesome - F/M/M, When Steve is with Nancy but neither of them really feel it is enough and Steve has a moment

Language: English

Characters: Jim "Chief" Hopper, Jonathan Byers, Joyce Byers, Nancy Wheeler, Steve Harrington

Relationships: Jonathan Byers/Nancy Wheeler, Jonathan Byers/Steve Harrington, Jonathan Byers/Steve Harrington/Nancy Wheeler, Steve Harrington/Nancy Wheeler

Status: Completed

Published: 2017-11-03

Updated: 2017-12-08

Packaged: 2022-04-03 05:15:32

Rating: Explicit

Warnings: Graphic Depictions Of Violence

Chapters: 6

Words: 14,104

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

Byers slept like a god damned train wreck.

1. Chapter 1

Author's Note:

Disclaimer: I don't own Netflix's "Stranger Things." Everything belongs to whoever owns them, my wishful thinking aside.

Authors Note #1:I really liked the idea of Steve/Nancy/Jonathan as the ultimate romantic otp3. This fits in between Eleven disappearing in the end of season one and the scene where Nancy and Steve give Jonathan the camera and the gap between season 1 and 2. I wrote this previous to season two coming out so it is essentially all AU. - This was actually the first Stranger Things fic I started, after finishing the first season a year ago. But shorter fics got in the way and I lost inspiration, but I was able to finish it up as the new season approached.

Disclaimer:adult language, mild sexual content, first time(ish), threesome, vaguely polyamory-ish, just boys being dudes, mild period typical homophobia.

Byers slept like a god damned train wreck.

That, more than anything, was what he noticed first.

He didn't sleep at all like he lived. Quiet and hunchbacked into whatever grudging shape provided the least notice. Absent from people and their conversations by choice and reputation. Given that, you'd think the weirdo would at least keep with the same theme when it came to everything else. Right?

Wrong.

Nah, Byers slept like everything he probably felt but wasn't saying. Like what those damn pictures of his stood for or whatever. He'd never been good at metaphors. At finding the meaning in things that weren't obvious, but he wasn't an idiot. And this moment - in the

same bed, breathing the same air and sharing the same mingling scent between the three of them - had given the guy layers he wasn't sure what to do with.

Honestly, he'd liked it better when he thought he'd had the guy figured. Which, admittedly, had been back in that alley just before Byers had shown him his back. Like after everything he didn't think he was even worth it. Making something inside him snap in a way he didn't know he was even capable of. In a way he didn't *want* to be capable of, to be honest.

Byers was a god damned mess.

He looked down, swallowing the snort of amused frustration that rose thick in his throat as the muscles in Byer's back rose and fell through the thin of his shirt. Highlighting every knob of his spine until it might as well have been see-through. Somehow distracting him from the obvious as the hitch of Byer's left leg remained unashamedly where it was - draped across his lap, inches from his dick. Head face-planted in the crease between the pillows, growing the type of bed-head he knew from experience would need a wash to sort out.

Not that Byers seemed to care about that sort of stuff.

All in all, it was the kind of thing you couldn't look away from if you tried.

Byers slept hard and fast like he didn't get enough of it, *ever*, and every second was precious. He slept with absolutely no regard for any and all innocent bystanders. Mainly *him* and perhaps Nancy who'd somehow managed to migrate between them sometime during the night. Knowing damn well she hadn't started out that way. That was something she'd done herself. Her way of saying what they were now, he supposed.

His nose twitched as he held back a sneeze. Watching the dust modes twirl idly above his head as he looked around the room. Realizing he hadn't gotten a chance to do it before- well, everything. Still able to smell the smell of gasoline and burning carpet tart and chemical-dry in the air.

Wondering if it was even worth untangling himself from the mess of limbs and bed-warm skin and putting some distance between him and Byers for appearances sake. Knowing it wouldn't be long until the others woke up and then everything would be confused expressions, hopeful glances and hot flushes of embarrassment.

Surprisingly though, he didn't mind all that much. Deciding to just lay back and let the moment ride. Watching Byers' chest rise and fall on the other side of the bed as Nancy made up the neutral ground between them.

That probably shoulda' been his first clue everything was about to slip sideways on him.

But hey-

Hindsight, right?

He wished he could say he didn't know how they'd ended up like that. Sleeping together on Byers' too small bed. But since it also coincided with the first time he'd started believing in monsters since he was about eight years old and still afraid of the dark, he decided to give himself a pass on that one.

Only thing was, for better or worse, things changed after that.

He figured out that Carol and Tommy weren't really that good of friends after all and ditched them like his dad did with his empties. Out of sight, out of mind. Instead, the three of them started to be the new common dominator at school. It took some doing. Positive reinforcement, Nancy called it, but eventually Byers started joining them on his own. Seeking them out and slowly gravitating into their orbit so smoothly it made him wonder why it'd taken so long in the first place.

At first it was weird keeping a guy around who had a thing for his girl.

But since it made Nancy happy he figured he couldn't be a square about it, either.

And what, look jealous? Of Byers?

No god damn way.

Only problem was, he wasn't counting on how much he started *liking* it. How Byers started feeling more like a friend then a rival or just a flat out enemy. And how it all seemed to happen so damn fast. Just like everything else. He felt like he was barely treading water most days. Meanwhile Byers' kid brother had damn near eaten a nightmare for breakfast or something. He still wasn't clear on the wheres, whens, or more importantly- *hows* of all that. But he was convinced it'd give him nightmares if he tried.

Well, new ones anyway.

The truth was, Jonathan Byers was actually kind of cool, in a weird way. He had sweet music on more mix tapes than he'd ever seen in his life. Half of which seemed to gravitate into his car without him knowing how they'd gotten there. He started to associate the crisp *click* and *grind* of a camera shutter with the sound of the guy's footsteps. Forced to remind himself that dudes didn't do the things he kept thinking about doing. Especially when it came to Byers stupid hair always being in his stupid fucking face. Damn near making his fingers itch wanting to brush it away.

But it wasn't until one day, when Nancy was sick with some flu that'd been going around since the week before, that things really started to angle into dangerous waters.

He was sitting at a corner table in the cafeteria during his free period. Text books splayed around him like good intentions, but with a sketch book slap in the middle. So focused on the section of shading he was smudging that he didn't realize Byers was standing behind him till the guy actually said something.

"Hey."

He jumped about half a mile, give or take some change. Chair creaking dangerously as he wobbled on place. Hand slapping down on the page with a guilty slam, like he'd been caught doing

something he shouldn't. Pencil skittering off over the table, probably never to be seen again, as close to half the cafeteria turned to look. Whispering.

"Jesus! Some warning next time, Byers!?" he gasped, trying to salvage the situation as he smoothed his hair and settled back into the chair with a careless slouch. More irritated with himself than anything when he realized the imprint of his watch had cut a shallow crease into the paper. Right damn in the center of the-

Jonathan's eyes just narrowed. Crinkling in the corners like the precursor to a grudging laugh before one of those walls of his came down and smoothed the expression away.

"Hey," Byer's said again, like he hadn't had a heard it over his heart attack the first time. Coming out as both a greeting and an apology before slipping slow into the seat across from him when he made no move to protest. The knobs of his knees skimming his with awkward intimacy before angling away again.

"Hey," he returned, determined not to make things weird. But failing miserably when he realized this was probably the first time the guy had approached him on his own - without Nancy as a buffer.

Huh.

Baby's first steps.

Nance would be proud.

"What are you doing?" Jonathan asked.

"Free period, man," he shrugged, trying not to make a big deal about it when Byer tapped at the edge of the drawing. Pointed and firm like he wasn't going to leave it alone. Because, *yeah*, of course he wouldn't.

He shrugged again. "Just doodling...killin' time. Got all my homework done for once. So-"

Somewhere across the cafeteria, Tommy and Carol's laughter rose up. Cutting, sharp and deliberate. Not having to look up to know that

he'd find them staring. Things had been kind of- *strained* between the three of them lately. Ever since he'd told them what he really thought of them and forced them to back off on Byers all in the same day.

The truth was, the end of that friendship had barely caused a ripple for the two of them. Finding friends had never been a problem for Tommy and Carol. Keeping them long-term was usually the issue. And of course, now they had a whole new circle that was only all too eager to agree with them when it came to him, Nancy, Byers, and well-

Not that he really cared.

Okay, that was a lie.

He *did* care.

And so did Nancy when it came to what they were sayin' these days.

Byers was the only one that didn't seem to notice.

Which honestly made him feel pretty low when he realized it was probably because the guy was so used to it he couldn't tell the difference.

"Hey, there's a new movie showing tonight, some sort action flick with-" he started. Cutting himself off when he realized Jonathan wasn't listening. Instead he was staring at his sketch book. Looking upside down at a gnarled forest of horror-story trees and dripping sap.

His cheeks burned. Not exactly sure why he cared that Byers was looking, other than he suddenly did. *A lot*. Maybe it was the way he was looking at it. Maybe it was the fact that he automatically figured Byers would find something to criticize. Or maybe it was just because they shared the same nightmares nowadays. He didn't know. All he did was that for a stuttered half second he was caught between wanting to cover it with his hands and just toss everything to the wind and ask what haunted the inside of his eyelids these days. You know, after-

His molars ground together in frustration.

He wasn't used to this.

To his life being complicated.

Upside down.

He'd been working on the drawing for over a week here and there. Starting with just one wicked looking tree before the idea had gotten wild on him. But it was the center of the thing that was the real kicker. Bringing everything together like he'd planned it from the start.

He leaned back, forcing his fingers to uncurl from around the flimsy metal rings. Trying to be casual about it when Byers took the opportunity to nudge it slowly to the side so he could see.

He hadn't understood the point of it, other than exorcising some nightmare fuel he really didn't need. Been there done that, hit it with a bat, thanks. At least until he realized what he was drawing in the center. It was the beam of a flashlight, spreading outwards - held by someone outside the frame. Lighting up the bark and branches in a halo of uneven fluorescent light.

He swallowed roughly. Not really sure why until he realized that he'd never seen that expression on Byer's face before. Somewhere between surprised, pleased and maybe a bit transported. Realizing he wanted to see it again, and soon.

"Why?" Byers asked, eyes narrowing again as he looked from him to the paper then up again. Like he hadn't meant to say it out loud and now had to run with it to save face. "What made you feel it? To be able to do this? Draw something like this?"

He wanted to be irritated at the question.

But he wasn't, just conflicted.

Confused.

"I dunno, what makes you decide when to take a picture?" he shot back.

The silence was dead.

Possible.

And incredibly damning.

It was kind of weird how two people could have so much in common and not know it until *bam*- they suddenly just did.

Byers seem to feel it too because he cleared his throat. Eyes darting up as he pointed a long finger at the sketch-book again. Waiting until he nodded shallowly like permission before he started paging through it. Mainlining the distraction like it was oxygen as he just sat there like a god damned idiot.

Something in him fluttered, like misplaced arousal only watered down whenever Byers paused on a sketch. Really looking. *Really taking it in*. Paying more attention to them than his parents had since he'd graduated from stick figures in first grade. Actually giving a damn and maybe even appreciating them a little bit as he took his time going through them.

It wasn't until the warning bell rang that they were able to jerk out of it. Gradually coming out of the muddled fog that'd settled low and strangely comfortable in the intervening minutes.

Byers was the first to shoot to his feet, making him wince at the scream of metal sliding back across worn linoleum. About to swing his backpack over his shoulder and make a clean get-a-way before he stopped him.

"Where are you going?" he asked automatically.

Those damn, dark eyes of his lowered again before firming up to level with him like challenge. Making something in him heat, like someone had gone and set fire on his insides for fun, before the kid shook his hair of his eyes and muttered a reply.

"The Dark Room. I've- I've got pictures to develop."

Of course he did.

His mouth was dry as his tongue slipped out. Wetting across his lower lip with an exaggerated drag he wasn't aware of until he realized Byers was watching him without blinking.

"Show me?" he asked. Not sure where the desire had come from, but deciding that anything had to be better than *this*. Caught up in each other in a way he didn't quite understand. Careening around like wasps in a soda-pop bottle trap. Pretty sure he hadn't even dared to *breathe* in the last thirty seconds, give or take.

Byers just nodded, stiff and uncertain. Like he wasn't sure why he'd even bother asking.

But it was enough for him to collect his things and follow.

As you might expect, not long after that things started to get out of hand.

2. Chapter 2

It wasn't long after, on a lazy Sunday night cooling his heels before school the next day, that he had his hands around his cock and the music warbling low. It was one of Byers's stupid mix-tapes he kept finding all over the damn place, the only one he hadn't managed to make himself return ever since that day trip the three of them made to the next city over.

Nancy had wanted to check out some clothing store at the mall and he needed new shoes. And not the same ones as everyone else was wearing, obviously. So driving eighty miles or so had seemed like a good idea at the time. He still wasn't sure exactly what Nancy had said to make Byers come. All he knew was that when he'd picked him up that morning, the guy had been waiting for him like a mar in the mist. Dark and almost unearthly until he nodded and shouldered his backpack.

It was the same trip where he and Byers had been stuffed up together in the car after he'd gotten his shoes and had done a circuit of the mall about three or four times while Nancy looked like she was just getting started. Eventually meeting Byers back at in the lot accidentally out of sheer boredom. Swallowing each other's silence until Byers eventually heaved a sigh and slapped the tape against his shoulder like a silent demand.

He'd been listening to it ever since.

He wasn't exactly sure why.

Something about the songs and how they all fit together.

He was stroking himself slow – unhurried and syrupy-easy – and thinking idly of Nancy when an intrusive thought drifted through his mind's eye. Wondering suddenly if Byers would fuck like he fought. Feral, dangerous and unrelenting. If it would be like it'd been in that alleyway, a slow build that kept ramping up and up until suddenly-

What the hell?

He frowned, mouth twisting in automatic distaste as he checked himself. Squeezing himself just a bit too hard as he panted up at the ceiling. Trying to figure out where that junk had even come from as his cock throbbed bloody murder in his fist. Trying and failing to conjure up the soft fall of Nancy's breasts and the way her hair looked spread across the curl of her shoulders. Instead, he found himself fighting flashes of limp brown hair and an awkward slash of a mouth that rarely knew a smile.

Funny thing was though that his cock didn't slacken for a second.

In fact, it only got harder.

Fuck.

He took up running himself stupid in the evenings after that.

Figuring that it would take his mind of things and clear his head.

Give him less time to dwell on things he shouldn't.

Or, at least he tried to.

Maybe it was his own damn fault for jogging past Byers house in the first place.

Maybe he'd even done it on purpose.

Subconsciously, or something.

Hell if he knew.

All he *did* know was that the third time he put his sneakers to pavement in the dusty dark, he'd barely made it a minute past the gravel turn-off when the sound of a second pair of shoes biting across the rocks rasped loud enough to startle him. Heart pounding high and heavy in his chest until the kid's familiar outline highlighted itself against a low, harvest moon.

"Byers? What the hell?!"

He skidded to a stop, breathing hard and throat dry as the kid stopped about half a meter from him. Dark hair mussed up like he'd changed shirts in a hurry. Making him wonder if the dude had been waiting for him or something equally as creepy. Unable to help remembering the things that used to lurk in the dark around here as the night noises rose and fell in a discomforting hum.

"What are you doing out here?" he snapped, more put off by the guy's silence than anything. Making this ten times more awkward than it needed to be as Byers just stared at him. Rubbing his arms at the night chill like this was some damn social event or something.

The realization that this had *definitely* been planned, only came when he noticed that Byers was wearing his gym clothes. Or at least the same pair of shorts he wore to track and field and all that junk. Realizing that considering he'd never actually seen him wear anything other than jeans and trousers, it was probably the only pair of shorts the guy owned.

Byers just sniffed, kicking the dirt.

"Don't be stupid," he spat, like a sneer but without any real heat behind it. More like it was *Byers* who had the right to be pissed off about the whole thing rather than the other way around. "You shouldn't be out here alone at night."

"You think I can't take care of myself?" he challenged incredulously. Eyebrow arching high, mirroring the guy without really thinking about it. Remembering the moment he'd spun the bat in his hand before he'd slammed it down on that thing in Byers' hall. Telling himself that it was just like batting practice. That it wasn't anything different. That he could do this. That-

Byers expelled a breath that hazed steam between them. Eyes way too set and derisive for his liking as the kid pushed his hair out of his eyes and tipped his chin like an unspoken curse.

"Are we going to stand here and argue all night or should I go back inside and get a jacket?"

Asshole.

"We'll see if you can keep up," he snarled back, turning on his heel so that the dark road yawned in front of him. Hating that it immediately seemed less daunting than it had a few minutes early. "If you fall behind, I won't wait."

Byers never answered.

He just ran with him like they shared the same corrupted lungs and unspoken thoughts.

And honestly, he didn't know what to think anymore.

By the time they finished, Byers' shirt was clinging to his skin. Smelling like cold metal and the aftertaste of second hand smoke as he looked up at him through wild, sweat-matted hair like he figured he'd won something. Chest heaving with it as he quirked a lip at him and angled off towards home when they looped back after a good two miles or so. Disappearing into the unlit-dark without a word, shoes beating a disappearing tempo into the quiet as the street light above him – the last one that separated the Byers property from the rest of the suburbs - stuttered fitfully.

He stood there for a long time.

When he finally dragged himself home, he collapsed face first into his bed. Bunching up the comforter until it was safely around his face before he buried his face in it and just *screamed*.

He was cursed.

There was no other explanation for this shit.

The fourth and fifth time they didn't speak. Instead he gave himself a headache grinding his teeth. Swearing up and down that he hated everything about Jonathan Byers despite the fact that he knew he'd see him at school the next day. That he'd sit across from him with Nancy at lunch. Knowing deep down that he could always start taking another route. He could bring that stupid mix-tape with him the next day and slap it into Byers' chest with an annoyed sound and

just be done with it.

Only he didn't.

He couldn't.

He skipped the sixth night, climbing through Nancy's bedroom window and kissing her like he hadn't had her in *years* rather than days. Pushing things forward a bit more fiercely every time she hesitated, eyes full of unasked questions. Split somewhere between pleasure and disappointment when he came to the conclusion that while she was just as gorgeous as always. That while she *felt* just as good and right when he was snug inside her, it didn't seem to be as... *enough* as it used to be.

He didn't know what that meant.

He was pretty sure he didn't want to.

So after he'd finished and she was still there, close on her own edge, thighs rubbing together and whimpering, he took out his frustration on her with his fingers and tongue. Attacking her sex until he had to slap a hand over her mouth to keep her quiet as he took her over not once, but twice. Leaving her puddled and sated and pulling him close. Half hard just from the glory of it, but steaming angry under the surface when he realized that once or twice during he could have sworn that when Nancy had arched her back, he'd seen Byers there underneath him. Lithe, long and just as his as Nancy was.

After that, it just started to become routine.

It was something they did together.

Mostly in silence.

Usually in silence.

They didn't talk about it.

Hell, he didn't know if Nancy even knew.

But somewhere along the line, it became theirs.

The tenth time Byers banged out of the screen door after he ran past the house, he paused long enough for the guy to pull even with him. Letting the quiet grow as the sound of their feet hitting the blacktop eventually synced like breathing. Silent like suffocation as Byers shot him a conflicted glance from under his fringe.

Only thing was, it wasn't going to last.

Whatever he'd been struggling with?

Whatever it meant in the scheme of things?

The truth was, even storms had a breaking point.

Besides, he'd realized he was ready to see what happened next.

So, with that in mind, it wasn't until he couldn't hold it in any longer that he turned his head and arched his brow in a playful challenge.

"Wanna race?" he hummed, wriggling a brow and bouncing on the balls of his feet as Byers' nearly tripped. Shooting him a confused look before pulling half a step ahead just to get a good look at him.

"You serious?" Byers muttered, high on the consonants. Body language momentarily pretentious before something far more familiar moved across his face. Like the things a grudging smile might be made of.

"Yep," he returned, popping the 'p' like Carol did with her gum, purposely obnoxious and loud. Wanting more than anything to get a laugh out of him as the moon started to rise through the skeleton trees on either side of them.

"You're on, Harrington."

That was all it took for the both of them to go off like a shot. Pounding down the road into the dark together, neck to neck. Something warm and suspicious close to pleasure flaring in his chest when he realized those last few words had aired out light, honest and

easy.

Like the two of them had forgotten they didn't do this.

That they weren't like this.

That this *wasn't* them.

Funny how afterwards all he could really think was how they *could* be.

He'd lost track of how many times they'd been out together, when one night Byers stuck around instead angling home. Pausing in the act before pivoting back on his heel. Expression closed, but not unwelcoming. Like he was going to say something but was also aware of what it might cost him. Staring up at him through the sweaty strings of his hair until he just blurted it out - all nervous and endearing in a way he didn't really know what to do with.

"They're good, you know."

"What are?" he replied, scuffing the dirt with the toe of his sneakers as the cold air burned its way through his lungs. On edge and maybe just as nervous as the moment threatened to go stale on them.

"Your drawings," Byers answered, waving his hand in front of him as that moment in the cafeteria wafted back like a pleasant smell. "I think they are. It's just- I understand why you don't show them to people. They're yours – *just yours* – but- they add something, you know? It's a layer. And it's good. I mean, it *looks* good on you."

He didn't know it was possible to live off words until that moment.

3. Chapter 3

It was after Christmas and the camera and dangerously close to New Years - already struggling over the three different parties he was going to have to choose from – when he and Nancy were curled up on the couch in her parents den watching TV.

"I don't believe it you know," Nancy said out of the blue, tipping her head up to look at him during a Pepsi commercial as the TV hazed static on the very edges. Like the snow piling up outside was messing with the reception somehow.

"Believe what?" he asked, smiling as he pushed a messy curl off her face. Kissing her briefly, more a peck than anything, until he got a fond look out of her. Toes curling contentedly into the shag carpet as he deepened the next kiss into something a bit *more*. Keenly aware that Mrs. Wheeler was making more noise in the kitchen than was strictly necessary.

"That loving anyone, no matter who they are – *what they are* - is wrong. Or that people can only love one person. Like the way we do? I don't think that's where it stops, you know?" she answered eventually, just a little bit breathless from the kiss. Eyes warm with back-burnered want despite the seriousness of her tone.

Meanwhile, he was *drowning*.

He opened his mouth, but nothing came out to save him. Mouth arid-dry and deathly still as a dozen different images flashed – like an old movie stuck on rewind in the back of his head. Jonathan running with him. Jonathan laughing. The firm of his cock jumping in his hand when he woke up from something half-remembered. Dick leaking pearls of pre-cum across the sheets as he imagined what it would feel like if Byers had his mouth on him. Sucking him down, wide-lipped and greedy. Jonathan looking at his drawings. Jonathan watching him through his fringe. Jonathan grabbing his hand and yanking him down the hall of his beat up house as the lights flickered when he could've just left him there and-

"The more I look around - at my parents, at other people- *just people* -

the more I realize that most of them are bitter over someone. Bitter over something they didn't do. Bitter over something- *someone* they wanted but didn't let themselves have, and for what? The rules? They don't matter. They never have. It's just a big lie slapped onto something that doesn't even make sense," she hissed, frustration getting the better of her as the tightness in his chest threatened to suffocate him right then and there. Realizing with a disconcerting rush that if it wasn't for Nancy he was pretty sure none of this would have ever happened.

The thing was though, he didn't know if that was such a bad thing anymore.

Not when he knew now.

Knew there was more out there.

More he could have for his very own if he ever manned up and tried.

"I don't want to be like that. I don't want that to be me. I don't want to miss out on the things that are really worth it - on the people who are worth it - just because some people say it's wrong. Do you?"

Do you?

Do you?

Do you?

No," he croaked. Thinking about Byers and the way something in the pit of his belly dipped whenever he saw him. Thinking about the set of his lips before he let go of a rare smile. Thinking about that morning-after, when they'd woken up tangled together on that skinny little mattress. And how he'd never felt more at ease with himself, more safe, cherished and *covered* in his entire life. "Me either."

Her smile was kind and maybe even a bit hopeful when she looked up at him.

But he was too twisted up on the inside to ask her why.

A couple weeks into the New Year, the three of them arranged to hit up a movie. Something new and twisted that Byers actually brought up wanting to see even though he figured they'd had enough of 'new and twisted' for a lifetime.

They were fooling around on Nancy's porch as they waited for Byers to pick them up. All panting pulls of air and pleased sounds when he caught sight of him watching them from the edge of the lawn just over Nancy's left shoulder.

A couple different emotions passed through him as he pressed a sloppy kiss into Nancy's hairline and tried not to react. Realizing since he hadn't heard the rattle of an engine, that probably meant Byers had parked somewhere down the road and walked. Which made sense considering how parked up the street was. Nothing saying the guy couldn't have called out once he saw what they were doing though. But in the end he settled on letting the moment ride. Watching him watch them as he kissed into the curve of Nancy's neck. Nibbling praise with his teeth when she let go of a sigh, tilting her throat so he could access it freely. Little fingers digging into the muscles of his back as Byers shifted - shuffling and awkward - from where he'd frozen on the lawn.

He watched him through the low slung of his lids before pulling Nancy firmly into him with a careful little grind. Getting something complicated and maybe a little wild out of it as the front of Byers' jeans visibly firmed up.

Oh Jesus, he was hard.

Byers was hard.

Hard from watching them.

Hard from watching Nancy.

Maybe even hard from watching him.

He wasn't sure why he did it, but the emotion behind it got caught in his throat as he dragged his hand up the small of Nancy's back. Raising the back of her pink blouse up a couple of inches as Byers'

mouth dropped open. Like he was about to say something – or maybe even announce himself - before Nancy tugged his lower lip between her teeth and made him groan as his gut twisted in pleasure. Knowing that Byers was watching. Mute and captive just a couple meters away as they put on a god damned *show*.

And the thing was, when he finally raised his eyes and stared right back at him, it wasn't jealousy or hate burning in the back of Byers' eyes. *It was want*. No, it was more than that. It was desire. *Need*. The kind that settled down bone deep like an itch you knew you shouldn't scratch, but wanted to desperately anyway.

He knew the look because it was the same one he saw in the mirror after he'd fucked himself awake. Hips rocking into the mattress and the nest of blankets he'd twisted up into a convenient pile sometime during the night.

Eventually though, the moment broke. One of Nancy's neighbours banged out his side door with a cigarette between his teeth, startling them apart. It was as good a time to finish up as any, he figured, so he just cleared his throat and raised a brow when Byers stuttered out a greeting. Nancy blushed, embarrassed and still aroused as she grabbed her purse and skipped off the porch steps. He followed a bit more slowly, allowing himself a grin when Byers jerked his head down the road to where he was parked. Hands shoved deep in his pockets as he angled away in that way every guy knows just by looking.

He doesn't remember what the damned movie was even about. All he could think about as they sat in the dark with Nancy between them - jumping at every scare - was that he was beginning to think this whole thing might not be one-sided after all.

That was the first night he didn't wake up in a cold sweat when he dreamt of them together. This time the lurid images and broad swaths of naked flesh were accepted and reeled in equally. Drinking it in as Byers... no- *Jonathan* moved underneath him. Above him. Around him. Feeling each other out like it was the first time when he knew – just knew – that he'd had him here before. Just like this.

He got greedy for it long before he realized that Nancy was there with them, turning it better somehow. Layered. Just like she'd talked about in front of the TV all those months ago. Like it was right, good and honest to god meant to be. He knew it was just a dream, but for the first time he didn't hate himself when he realized it was pleasure, not disgust, rising in the back of his throat as he stroked his cock with a pleasure-slow curse and watched Jonathan and Nancy kiss.

Still, it took one more hard knock on his house of glass to bring it caving in for good.

He was out running again. Because he was bored and it was a Thursday night and honestly he'd started to enjoy it by this point, when something prickled in his hind brain like a warning.

He hadn't been paying attention to anything in particular. Not even his surroundings. It sounded weird, but there was this head space he got into sometimes when he ran. A part of him he wasn't able to access unless his lungs were burning and his heart was beating so loud it was hard to hear anything else.

But for some reason this feeling squirmed through. Making him stumble, losing the natural rhythm as that part of your brain people always talk about - the one that still remembers what it's like to be prey - hunched its shoulders. Making him stop right there in the middle of the road as his eyes darted back and forth. The worn road. The fading dusk. The forest on either side of him. The lack of cars. No people. Not much of anything before-

That was all the warning he got before the sound of tires whipping through gravel screamed into the road half a meter from the t-intersection he'd just passed. Blinding the road ahead with its high beams as he jerked in surprise. Dancing off the center line he was following to the shoulder. Throwing one arm up to cover his eyes as starbursts splotched across his vision.

What the hell?

Who the fuck would-

He waited until his vision adjusted before he did anything. Tempted to flip them the bird as they passed before the moment dragged uncomfortably long. Jogging backwards to get a good look at them before he went cold. Getting an edgy, almost iridescent view of the two black suits sitting in front. Realizing they'd almost pulled even with him, headlights reflecting off his orange shorts like a warning instead of making any effort to pull ahead.

His eyes flicked from the white shirts and black ties to the nondescript grey Chevy sedan purring up a storm in front of him. Gut twisting as their bland expressions grew unnerving instead of just plain weird. But it wasn't until they stepped on the gas rather than the brakes, revving the engine once, then twice before slamming down - vicious and squealing - that he knew he was in deep shit.

They say when adrenaline spikes through you, the world narrows. You don't think right, usually because you think you're about to biff it. Most times you end up doing shit you didn't know you were capable of in the first place. Whether it was words or fists or something worse, usually it came down to fight or flight. And since there was a car lurching forward - cutting the distance between him and it at an alarming rate - his feet were already doing the latter before the rest of him could process what was happening.

Shit. Shit. Shit. Shit. Shit!

Part of his brain was still there, stuck on it. Indignant, high pitched and loud as he raced down the road. Screeching that they couldn't do this. That they had to have the wrong person. That this was a mistake. Only- he knew it wasn't. He might not have been there for the fireworks, but he knew. *Shit, he knew everything.* Nancy had told him what happened afterwards. About the government and that strange little girl with the dark eyes. He knew enough that apparently someone had been keeping tabs on him. Enough that-

The engine roared again, following him as he peeled down a side-street. Hopes crashing and burning when he realized it was almost deserted. There were barely four houses and none of them had their lights on. He cut through a lawn. Then another. Legs burning as he hid behind a garden shed and watched the Chevy creep past. Looking for him.

His hands were shaking. Trembling against the hem of his t-shirt as he waited for them to go past before darted back across the street behind them. Ducked and scuttling so they wouldn't notice through their rear-view mirrors. Almost braining himself on a low hanging branch as he darted into the brush and crashed through the thinning forest towards the main road. Heart thumping in his throat as he looked around widely. Realizing with a sinking feeling that he was still a couple miles from home.

He just needed to make it back to the highway.

Back to where there were street lights.

People.

They couldn't do anything in plain view.

They'd have to stop.

They couldn't-

He panicked when the headlights found him again. Sweeping out of the trees before the tell-tale scream of tire-treads growled in the evening quiet. Engine revving as he tried to look behind him and keep running at the same time.

They weren't stopping.

They were going to-

4. Chapter 4

A dark shape hit him running. Sending them rolling into the ditch just in time for the headlights to pull onto the main road. Low beams switching to high as they squealed past. Searching. He sucked in a breath, gargling a tortured sound as something sharp stung static across his side. Feeling something tear, then give way, caught under both their weight.

He shifted. Opening his mouth to say something as the person's heartbeat thundered a heavy tempo where it was pressed up against his. But the disembodied hand that slapped over his mouth a second later was clear. No sound. No movement. Stay still. Stay quiet. Maybe they won't come back. Maybe they'll think he got away. Maybe-

It wasn't until the moon shifted, highlighting Byers' face - mud-speckled, red and hovering above him - as the glow of the Chevy's taillights faded from view, that he breathed for the first time in what felt like days.

"Byers?" he croaked.

"It's alright, I think they're gone," the kid whispered, chest rising and falling frenetically as the adrenaline started to peter out. Breath warm and stale as it gusted intimately over the slope of his neck. He blinked into the moonlight, wincing as their limbs got tangled. Pinching skin against the metal drainage pipe as Jonathan peered over the embankment.

He waited another handful of seconds before he levered himself up on his elbows. Winded and hurting as his sneakers finally found traction in the mud.

Christ, Byers sure packed a punch for a guy that was all angles.

But then again, he knew that already.

He hissed through his teeth. Clutching his side as they scrambled out of the brackish water and up onto the nearest lawn. Stowing what he wanted to say as Byers' shushed him, pointing up at the house and

the lights shining from the front room. He ended up following behind they hurried around the side of the house and out of view. Wrinkling his nose when his hand came back wet. Not really wanting to know what he was covered in as he made a face and wiped his hands on his shorts.

"How did you-" he started, realizing he was fisting the guy's shirt like it was the only thing stable and worse- Byers was letting him. In fact, it was like it didn't even register. Instead, Byers led him over to the side of the house and peered around the corner. Everything about him on edge and spoiling for a fight as the road stayed quiet.

"We need to tell Hopper," Byers said after a moment. Keeping his voice down as the kitchen window switched on. Barely able to hear the sound of someone humming to themselves as they did the dishes as the light haloed a sickly flickering yellow. "They were probably just trying to spook you. Their way of telling you they know about you. But-"

"Wait, how do you know? What's going on? How did you find-"

"Because they've been doing the same to me," Byers returned bluntly, looking him right in the eye for a long moment before skittering away again. Chin jutting defensively, like he was waiting for him to call him on it.

But he didn't.

Not even close.

Instead, the sick feeling in his stomach grew layers.

"Nancy?"

The nod he got in response was grave.

"Christ," he growled, sweeping his hand through his hair. Carding it back as his fingers came back smelling foul and metallic. What did they want with him? With Nancy? Byers? Did that mean they were watching his folks too? Were they really that worried they were going to squeal? Or was it something else? It wasn't like anyone would believe them, anyway. Not even if they tried. They had to

know that, didn't they? Then why the scare tactics? Why did they almost run him down in cold blood like that? Was it some sort of sick, CIA mind game? Some psychological shit?

Damn. What'd he gotten himself into?

He stumbled away, needing the distance only to curse when he stubbed his toe on a drain pipe. Barely able to make out Byers hovering beside him as a thick layer of cloud blocked the moon from view. Chewing on a couple choice words when he ended up rubbing shoulders him. Like he was following him or something. Sticking close.

"Perfect! I can't see *shit* out here," he snarled, the ache in his side making it almost impossible to do anything else but clench his fist and ride it out. Entertaining the idea that he might have actually broken a rib or two before the worst of it seemed to subside into a dull ache.

"I have something, hold on," Byers answered, reaching into the inner pocket of his jacket and pulling out a small flashlight before-

"Jesus," Byers swore.

He looked down, following the beam as it lit up his shirt and shorts. Realizing that what he'd figured was water was actually blood. *A lot of it.* He looked down at his hands and saw the same thing, feeling the warmth of it seeping between his fingers as he pressed down on the wound through the thin of his t-shirt.

"You're bleeding!"

"It's fine," he said automatically. Gritting his teeth as he noticed that, *fuck- it really did hurt.* "I think I sliced it on that metal pipe in the ditch. I'll look at it when I get home. Probably just nicked it is all."

"Like hell you are," Byers answered waspishly, leaning in close as he shined the light at it. Peeling his fingers away before snorting and lurching to his feet. "That's going to need to be cleaned out, the sooner the better. Probably stitches too."

"It's fine," he repeated. Mind going a mile a minute as he tried to figure out a way this night didn't end with him getting grounded and his ass whooped. His dad was still pissed about the beer. If he found out he had to go to the hospital and get stitched up, out running or not, his old man would have him with his belt all the same.

"I can do it."

He paused, blinking. Turning to look at him, certain he'd heard wrong.

"You can what?"

"I can stitch it up if you want. I've done it before. My mom taught me," Byers explained, shrugging. Looking down at his feet for a half-second, embarrassed, before jerking them back up – like it was more a point of pride than anything. Daring him to say something as he squared his shoulders and spilled the rest. "We never- money is tight. Especially after Will came along. I think she figured, why pay for the hospital to fix you up when stitches were just a step up from a band-aid, you know?"

He blinked again. Trying to process it. More or less aware that his eyebrows might have been permanently lost in his hair. It was kind of hard to tell.

He didn't say anything to that.

There wasn't much he could say, really.

Instead, he thought about the angry lines on his father's face and the way Byers' hands were angling back to dig deep in his pockets again. He thought about what it'd felt like watching his mother do her makeup when he'd been a kid. The picture he'd drawn for her wrinkling in his hand as he tried and failed to get her attention as she brushed rouge across her cheeks. Then he thought about how he'd felt standing back to back with Byers as the creature screamed. Trusting each other like breathing as the carpet went up in flames. He thought about all those afternoons in the dark room, watching him develop roll after roll of film. He thought about the weekends where it was just the three of them. The curve of Nancy's smile when

she saw them together. And while he was still surprised by what ended up coming out of his mouth, he couldn't say he was all that surprised either

"My parents aren't home," he rasped.

Byers' nod was more affirming than it had any right to be. Watching him for a long moment, like he fully expected him to take it back or maybe just yell a bit. Before he moved beside him and ducked under his arm. Supporting his injured side as he wrapped the other around his waist. Keeping him grounded and close.

"Com'on, let's get you cleaned up."

He didn't know it was possible to be in so much pain but still turned on at the same time.

5. Chapter 5

He swiped his hand across the mirror when he got out of the shower. Eying himself through the steam as the wound on his side throbbed, still bleeding stubbornly. Spreading watered-down red ribbons that kept staining his mother's good towels in a way he knew he should be paying more attention to.

The reflection in the mirror was more or less the same as it always was. Hair wet and slicked back. A pleasing mix of muscle and runners-definition. But would it be enough? Would Jonathan want that? With him? Was he enough for someone like Jonathan Byers? Who had talent and the drive to grab whatever the hell he wanted practically coming out his ears?

His lips twisted, exhaling throatily before pushing off the counter with a jerk.

Heading out into the hall in nothing but a soft pair of sweats and water-wet skin.

It was all or nothing, right?

Might as well lay all his cards on the table.

It wasn't like he had *everything* to lose or nothin'.

He bit at the inside of his cheek distractedly, hating himself for it already.

Because privately even *he* didn't appreciate the sarcasm.

He found Byers at the table, looking awkward and out of place in his mother's newly renovated kitchen. Sitting beside his dad's ancient first aid kit and a bottle of Absolut vodka, not Stoli, because his dad had it bad for whatever Reagan was spouting these days.

He eyed the bottle. Finding something endearing in the way the kid colored. Looking at him through the dark of his fringe as he padded over to the table. Lingered obviously down his chest before Byers

jerked eyes away again.

"It's to sterilize it. Make sure it doesn't get infected. I couldn't find any rubbing alcohol. Whatever was in that ditch probably wasn't good. There isn't anything I can do about tetanus if you haven't had your shots, though," Byers explained.

He nodded. Not caring either way.

It wasn't like his parents would know the difference.

They knocked that stuff back like it was water, anyway.

"Thank you," he said suddenly, standing there awkwardly. Realizing he hadn't had a chance to before. "I owe you one. I don't know what would have happened if you hadn't come along."

Byers just nodded, unscrewing the cap and sloshing a bit of vodka onto a gauzy cotton ball. For a long moment he figured that was the end of it. That any minute now Byers was going to tell him to sit his ass down, face away from him and let him do what he came here for.

But instead, the kid surprised him.

"I was- I was going to meet you for the run. I didn't know if you were going to be by tonight, but I was outside splitting wood while I waited. Then I saw the car - just like the one chasing you. It was waiting half a block from the house, pulled over on the side of the road. There were two guys in it. *They know*. About us? What we did? Those sons of bitch have been *watching*."

The blinding glare of the bastards' headlights lanced through his mind's eye like a headache. Feeling more like he'd dodged a bullet than ever as Byers' expression darkened. Fisting the gauze hard enough that it spilled out the side of his fist in snow-white creases.

"I figured if they were waiting there, they were probably waiting for you too. So I ran around the other way trying to find you before they did. I was in the right place at the right time, is all," Byers explained with a shrug. Modest to a fault or just fucking stubborn - a mixture of both, probably - as the guy acted like saving his life from vehicular homicide was something he did every Tuesday instead of well- *never*.

The silence was remarkably sober.

Especially on his end.

After all, what did you say to something like that?

Words weren't enough.

"What do we do?" he asked eventually, thick throated and more awkward than he was comfortable with.

"We tell Hopper, tomorrow," Byers affirmed. Expression focused and stern. "He needs to know what those government stiff's are up to."

"Why tomorrow?" he asked, amped up on adrenaline but forcing himself to stay still as the desire to move - to do something, *anything*, rose. "Why not now?"

Byers' expression soured slightly, lips twisting.

"He asked my mom out. They're seeing a movie or something. Will is at Mike's with the others for a sleepover. She told me not to wait up."

He laughed, surprising them with the sound as it spread, genuine and warm as a shit-eating grin split his face. The expression only getting wider when Byers' shot him the stink eye. Something softer than distaste taking up residence at the idea of his mom macking on the Sheriff.

"Com'on, let's get that sorted out before you bleed all over the floor," Byers grunted finally. Pointing at his side before gesturing him forward.

He was still grinning as he sat down obediently. Pointedly not overthinking the comfortable sprawl until they knocked knees and brought everything rushing back.

There was a tense, possible moment that stretched for a long time after that. But neither of them pulled away. He wondered if that said something. It probably did, but he didn't know what. Nancy would have known. She was good at that kind of stuff. The little things. The finishing touches. The small things that ended up mattering, a lot.

The truth was, she was right.

He was an idiot sometimes.

"Here," he hummed, snagging the vodka from the table and offering it to him. Palms itching as the cool of it fit into the creases and tried to make a home there. Feeling like it was only fair, considering the circumstances.

He wanted to do this right, no matter what happened next. Even if all he did was see Byers out after he'd patched him up. Standing on the front porch as all his 'maybes and might have beens' died a slow death in the fall air. Or if things ended better, with blood-soaked gauze left on the kitchen table and the lights dimmed low. With his bedroom door open just a crack and the smell of sweat and sex lingering in the air like a permanent musk. Figuring things out as they went. Moving together in the dark. Negotiating. Navigating. Giving. Taking. Everything that scared him half to death just thinking about. And the rest stuffed somewhere in between.

He wanted to make sure that even if he couldn't find the right words, Byers- *Jonathan* would know- somehow.

Because the truth was, something had to give.

"It's to steady your nerves. Don't want your hands shaking when you've got a needle in me."

The kid raised a brow at that. Watching him through the dark of his fringe with a surprisingly calculating expression before shrugging and letting his answer fly. Making an abortive movement towards the needle and thread before hunching his shoulders and turning back towards him. Body language tense and hooded - like some lanky, but surprisingly vicious bird of prey.

"You're assuming I need it."

Their fingers brushed when Byers' reached forward and took a swig anyway. Setting it down hard on the kitchen table, before nudging it around with the point of his knuckles to read the label. He wasn't sure if it was bravado, or just pride that kept the kid from making a

face, but either way he was privately impressed.

Vodka was nasty straight.

It was an interesting bit of side-stepping they were doing. And he knew for a fact that they were both aware of it. Conscious of what *wasn't* being said. What was yawning in front of them, mounting tension by the second. And admittedly, despite all that, he might have been a bit distracted. Caught on the downright *obscene* way Byers' lips wrapped around the neck of the bottle. Throat working. Calling attention to tendons and definition he'd never noticed before. To an Adam's apple just like his and the hint of strong shoulders pulling underneath the fabric of his grey sweater. A stark difference from the delicate taper of Nancy's neck and the small of her shoulders.

"Double for you," Byers instructed, startling him. Voice going softer when he made to continue. Looking at him with an expression that spoke for itself. That he could still back out and Byers would drive him to the hospital, no questions asked. "This is going to hurt."

He nodded.

"I'm ready."

He wasn't.

Not by a long shot.

Story of his life, really.

They were silent for a long time after that. Him because he didn't trust himself to speak once the needle was in him. And Byers because out of the two of them, he was the one with the job to pay attention to.

Instead, he spent his time thinking about how they'd gotten here. To this point. This place. This time. *This everything*. And more importantly, he wondered of Byers was thinking about it too.

Personally, he was trying not to quantify it. He liked Nancy. But he also liked Byers. He liked both of them and something in him was just- *reaching*. Wanting it all. He didn't know what that made him. Not straight edged, he supposed. But not a queer either. Maybe he was both. Could you even be both? He knew some people said they liked men and women like that, but no one really talked about it much. Maybe it was just the people. Maybe it was less about liking dudes and more about Byers himself.

Jonathan.

Fuck.

His stomach twisted. Swallowing a grunt of pain when the needle skated through again. Feeling Byers' eyes on him when he grabbed the bottle and took another burning swallow. Willing it to numb him somehow, like the movies on the big screen. That was what always happened, right? The big hero fisting a bottle of booze as he got patched up by a medic before going back out into the fight. Taking everything with a grimace and the occasional swear as the liquid sloshing in the bottle gradually became less and less.

He inhaled - throaty and obvious - when Byers' hand gentled down the small of his back. Barely there, but mind-blowingly brave. Getting him used to the idea. To the catch of calloused-dry palms and long fingers. Letting him wrestle with the knowledge that it was a man's hand on him and how Byers wasn't pulling away. Instead, his fingers were spreading out, millimeter by millimeter - just shy of ticklish. Blunt, quick-bitten nails grazing down the knobs of his spine like he wanted to-

Oh-

His throat hitched as the idea took root and spread. Tinting his cheeks like a blush as he realized Jonathan had stopped pulling the thread through in mid-tug. Eyes fixed on some point of his back he couldn't see as the attention made him close his eyes and shiver. He leaned back, in silent encouragement, as the hand got bolder. Exploratory. Trailing down, further and further until it stopped awkwardly at the waistband of his sweats. Wondering if Byers had stopped breathing or if the echo of his heart pounding loud in his

chest had just deafened him to everything else as he exhaled in a shuddering rush.

Oh, wow.

He was hard. Cock straining against the soft of his sweats. That much was obvious through the fabric. What *wasn't* obvious was the fact he was leaking against the curl of his thigh. Shit, they hadn't even done anything yet! He was this far gone on nothing but want and closeness and *holy cow*- he was a goner.

Jesus Christ, he wanted-

He felt the change in the air before he heard the words. A shallow shift from one emotion to another that encouraged a sound from him. Something like a moan or maybe just the beginning of a word before Jonathan was suddenly close behind him. Covering him over in a looming sort of way he decided he liked immediately.

"Steve...I-"

Christ. This was it. They were gonna-

The lights above them flicker-flashed. Making Jonathan tense up and stop like someone had hit an imaginary switch. Making a rush of unsteady sympathy rise in his throat – drowning out the disappointment with barely a pause. Because he knew why. *He'd been there.* Maybe not from the start, but he'd been through the part that counted.

He knew why Nancy and Jonathan flinched whenever the electricity flickered. He knew because he used to be the same. For weeks afterward he couldn't handle anything that flickered. Finding himself on edge and instinctively looking for a weapon. Anything to defend himself from a world he hadn't realized existed right alongside theirs. Separated by next to nothing and a thousand times more dangerous than anything he'd ever dreamt up as a kid.

He kept the bat in his car for a reason, after all.

"It's alright, it's just the bulb," he assured, quickly. Turning so the kid could see him. *So Jonathan would know.* "My mom said something

about it before they left. I have a box of replacements somewhere around here, just haven't gotten to it yet."

Jonathan's expression smoothed in fractions. Gradual like he didn't quite believe him until the bulb smoothed back to good behavior. Steady and unassuming. Practically able to feel the kid squaring his shoulders before he picked up the needle and blotted at the wound with a fresh bit of gauze.

He didn't say a word about it.

Not even when the stiff line of Jonathan's shoulders refused to relax.

Because at the end of the day, he got it.

Hell, after what they'd been through?

After what they'd seen?

He figured they got a permanent pass for that kind of shit.

"So- you've done this a lot?" he asked carefully, keeping things light. Free of what'd been building between them, but still not far from it all the same. Leaving the ball firmly in Jonathan's court as he settled in to see what he did with it. Absolutely *not* looking down at his side as a series of warm breaths gusted across his skin. Three of them for every pull on the thread. Feeling something in him give - something beyond just flesh - every time Jonathan's hands tensed against the thin of his ribs.

The urge to grab him and just *fall* was overwhelming.

Jonathan bobbed his head in answer. Cutting the thread with the sharp of his teeth in a way that probably wasn't sanitary. Instead, he concentrated on the feeling. Not the pain. Because it *did* hurt. A lot. Enough that he was still saving face with his fingers trying to dig grooves right through the kitchen table. No, he meant the other thing.

Jonathan.

The hands on his back were fluttery and understated this time

around. Cautious. Like the reality they were breathing through was a dream swallower. A poisoner on the cusp of slipping its target the fatal drop. Like one wrong move would shatter this tentative thing and leave them right back at square one.

But the part that really made tracks?

It was that he knew he wasn't in this alone anymore.

That somehow Jonathan felt it too.

Jonathan wanted it.

Him.

And maybe it was that, more than anything, that gave him the courage to fly to them all the way to the damn finish line.

6. Chapter 6

"All done," Jonathan told him, eyes darting from him, to the table and back again. Breaking through the disconcerting and *okay, fine*-erotic muddle of his thoughts as the kid smoothed the medical tape firmly down his side. Making sure the pad was going to stay put before taking a careful half-step back.

"Yeah?" he echoed, raspy and soft in a way he barely recognized. Tongue peeking out to trace his lower lip as he gradually loosened his death grip on the table. Able to watch as Jonathan responded almost instinctively. Body language shifting to mirror his, inviting and challenging all at once.

Like a dare.

Like, just do it you bastard.

What're you waiting for?

Jonathan opened his mouth to say something the same moment he angled forward and killed the space. Swallowing the endearing "mmmpph" before the words died and the warm press of Jonathan's lips against his – chapped and barely parted - made something in his belly *tug*.

That first kiss - because yes, this was the shit he thought about, okay? - was a negotiation of peach-fuzz stubble and catchy-dryness. Rendering any attempt to catch his breath all but impossible as Jonathan pulled back just as quickly. Treating him to wide, sloe-eyes as wet his lips parted in surprise - sinfully slow and terrifying all at once.

He groaned.

Because honestly, how was this even real?

But then Jonathan was hedging in. Punching his lips with his like he'd gone and gotten a taste for it. Giving him a whole new meaning for the word sucker-punch as Jonathan caught his lower lip between

his teeth and *tugged*. Mouthing at him almost desperately until they were a mess of swollen, abused-red and he was not so quietly *dying* about it. Finding the space to skip a step and grind against him as Jonathan gasped into his mouth. The whites of his eyes blown at the sudden friction.

Holy damn.

It was awkward because there was a table between them. But somehow that was the least of his problems considering all he really wanted to do was slam the kid against the wall and grind into him – all violent and sweet - until they both came in their pants or something equally disgusting.

This was new ground and he wanted it all. Every god damned inch of it. He wanted to know what Jonathan's skin tasted like when he had the kid's back to the ground. He wanted to watch his face as he came. Watching the expressive twist of his mouth screw itself up before finally falling slack. Panting. Skin gleaming with sweat. He wanted to wrestle it out. To have skin against skin and not care who ended up where. He wanted to understand. To finally grab that last piece of the puzzle for his very own and-

"Your bandage," Jonathan rasped, fingers ghosting down the edges where the tape was already wanting to curl away from the skin. Nearly knocking one of the chairs over as they stumbled together towards the other side of the room. Grabby and unsteady.

"Don't care," he answered brightly. Grinning like a fucking idiot as he caught him by the collar and towed him closer. Catching him up against the door and pressing close. Able to feel how much Jonathan wanted as the crotch of his jeans brushed against his.

Still, he knew he had the home team advantage.

He was in his own territory. Familiar ground. His house. His living room. His whatever. It didn't matter how you explained it. Everything here was his and somehow, having Jonathan here - dark hair sticking against his forehead and breathing hard against his lips – made it that much more special.

The truth was, he was good at this kind of stuff.

He liked to take his time.

Hell, the first thing he did when going steady with someone was to figure out how she liked to be kissed stupid.

He was all about the extra effort.

He knew all the angles.

All the grooves.

The turns to take.

The ones to avoid.

And he used all that experience to back Jonathan into a corner. Sneaking a hand under the kid's shirt to trace the shape of his ribs. Teasing him with the blunt of his nails as Jonathan let go of a fractured sound. Surprising him by burying his head into the crux of his shoulder and dragging his teeth. Turning the tables so it was *him* sounding all needy. Knowing even as he boxed him in with hands and hips, that if Jonathan didn't want to be there, he wouldn't be.

But he did, and he was and-

"God, your fuckin' gorgeous," he breathed, feeling Jonathan shudder against him - still worrying the nape of neck with his teeth. Sucking warm little blotches into the humid curve before Jonathan reared back with a gasp that he swallowed with his tongue. Spreading pleasure like it was going out of style as they lost their balance. Sending them ricocheting off the frame, then the side table before Jonathan pinned him up against the wall and kept him there. "You have no idea how long I've wanted to-"

He cut himself off in mid-monologue, but not quick enough to save Jonathan's face from practically glowing at the praise. Tucking back into the crook of his neck it was too much and no where close to enough at the same time.

And yeah, he got that.

There was an obvious wet patch staining the front of his sweatpants as they swayed together. And Jonathan wasn't much better. Dick straining against the elastic of his running shorts in an obscene way that had him just itching to get his hands on him.

He didn't even think it through, honestly.

He forgot to look up and ask him if it was okay with his eyes.

Not once thinking about the fact that he had *no clue* what he was doing.

Instead, he just- folded.

Sliding down the wall in one smooth motion until he was on his knees and Jonathan was gasping above him. One hand braced up against the wall, the other fluttering against the curve of his shoulder like a question. Flighty and uncertain. Like despite how much he wanted this, there was still a part of him - a part that sounded like both their fathers, their friends, hell even the old preacher down the road – that held sway.

The ghost of fading stigmas and hurtful words were still too heavy to completely shake.

But maybe it was that unspoken part that made him sloppy. Rushing to stave off any awkward questions or worse. All those little ways of saying 'no' that were building in the back of his head. Even the ones that made him consider hitting pause - at least until they made it to a bed.

But he didn't.

And Jonathan was pulling at him now.

Wanting.

Too desperate to stop even though neither of them had a god damned clue.

He yanked the kid's shorts and boxers down in one go. Rude and abrupt in a way that seemed to be mirrored by the bounce of cock that nearly brained him. The head of Jonathan's dick pearling clear and dripping pre-cum as the jingle of his keys hitting the floor echoed loud in his ears.

"Nice," he breathed, without really thinking. Grinning to himself when Jonathan made a strangled sound. Something that could of have been words, but never really got past syllables.

It was better than he'd imagined. Because Jonathan was a fucking gangling *masterpiece*. With sinew-laced thighs and the dark splotch of moles dotted here and there - stark against the pale. Belly flat. Hips jutting. Cock curved up against his stomach and leaking. Just like those dirty magazines he'd found out in the woods one summer in that old shed.

He breathed, experimental and bold as the head of Jonathan's cock twitched. Thighs tense and tight on either side of him. Having to remind himself that whatever happened next was up to him as he made a careful pass with the fat of his bottom lip. Velvet heat over velvet heat. Almost choking on a laugh when he realized how stupid he was being.

It wasn't like he didn't know what to do with a dick, after all.

So, he did again.

Jonathan's hips jolted forward at the barest graze of pressure. Forcing him to pull back at the last minute to avoid getting choked. Feeling a hot flush spread at the thought as Jonathan clenched his fists like he was trying to stop himself from grabbing onto him. Like him just thinking of slipping forward and mouthing at the head was enough to make it real for both of them.

"Steve..."

Fuck.

"I've got you," he murmured, lips hot. "Relax, huh? I'm not going anywhere."

He could do this.

He'd gone down on Nancy a bunch of times.

How hard could it be?

Jonathan groaned when he closed his fist around his cock. Feeling more like he was pawing at him, inexperienced. Trying to mimic what he did to himself. Pumping into the warm curl of his hand - humid and sticky. Feeling awkward until he chanced a look and caught the expression on Jonathan's face. Realizing in a terrifyingly awesome rush that it didn't matter if he was. Because Jonathan was right there with him and that only made it hotter. *Better.*

Because the reflection in Jonathan's eyes was all pupil.

Blown and needy in the best possible way.

The choked off sound Jonathan let go of when he finally got over himself and swallowed him down was like nothing he'd ever heard in his entire *god damned life*. Able to feel the kid's cock firming against his tongue as he slowly taught himself how to swirl it around the head.

Suddenly gaining a whole new sort of respect for Nancy and virtually any girl he'd ever dated as he struggled to keep teeth, lips and tongue where they should be and not anywhere painful or just plain inconvenient.

It was harder than it looked.

That was for damn sure.

He was hard in his sweats. Cock pressed against the seam as Jonathan's taste flooded across the roof of his mouth. Musky and rich as he swallowed again. Just fucking *taking it* as the kid's hips started moving. Chasing a rhythm. Any rhythm. Swearing he could actually taste the difference when Jonathan's hands dug into his hair - tugging. Flooding his mouth with a blurt of pre-cum until it was almost too much, too distracting. Shivering as a trickle of spit leaked from the corner of his mouth.

Holy shit.

Holy shit.

Holy shit.

He pulled back, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. Breathing ragged. Lips almost swollen when he brushed them with his fingers. Cock jerking again when he thought about how he must look. Well used and gagging for it. And for once he could see the appeal. Grinning into the inner of Jonathan's thigh when the kid's cock nudged against his lips. Squeezing gently before leaning back and dragging his mouth over the crown. Getting inspired somewhere along the way to nuzzle into the crinkling black hair that smelled like-

Christ.

This time it was easier. Feeling like he'd learned something as he tongued down the shaft in a long, winding stripe. Just like Nancy did for him sometimes before licking back up and suckling the head. Closing his eyes into it as Jonathan desperately tried to hold back from thrusting.

He was close.

Jonathan didn't have to say it for him to know.

It was all there if you knew what to look for.

Because the dude looked fucking *wrecked*. Eyes wide, dark and too big for his face as he tipped his head back every time he tightened around the head. Lips parted above him, hedonistic and raw. So heady with the lulling power of it that he couldn't look away.

He didn't want to.

He'd never wanted anything more than *this* in his entire god damned life.

And as if on cue, Jonathan's eyes fluttered open. Watching him through dark lashes and a rangy sheen that ruined the thin of his lips

as he caught the bottom in his teeth. Pressing down until the skin went from red to white.

"Steve- I- oh- *fuck*-"

Jonathan was so far gone he was stuttering.

Voice so wrecked he thought he was going to die just hearing it.

High on knowing it was because of *him*.

That Jonathan was shaking - breathing harsh and wet - because *he* had him strung out like this.

And that no one- no one else had ever-

Shit.

He choked on a whine. Full on whimpering around the dude's cock as his polite mouthful suddenly jammed past suffocating. Loving every fucking minute of it as Jonathan cried out - Knotting his hands in his hair and cursing hoarsely as he emptied down his throat. Cumming so hard his fucking knees knocked together. Shattering apart as he kept him pressed up against the wall. Swallowing him down like there'd never been another option.

He managed to look up near the end so he could watch it all happen.

Leaning into the spider-press as shaking fingers brushed against his cheek. Grinning at the blissed out expression as Jonathan slackened in the bracket of his arms. A mess of long limbs and trembling over sensitivity as he slowly pushed away. Cock slipping from the heat of his mouth like an echo - swallowing the last of him with a greedy, tired sound. The strings of his hair felt heavy and significant against his sweaty forehead as he eased his neck this way, then that, stretching out the kinks as Jonathan slowly came down above him. Already nice and caught on the way the kid wanted to curl into himself. Like it was too much and even now all those gorgeous pieces were trying to collect themselves. Sprawled out every which way as his jaw popped and he licked his lips just to chase the last bit of Jonathan's taste as it faded from them like oxygen.

And yeah- all things considered, the entire thing was kind of god damned beautiful.

He was somewhere on the floor, sprawled next to him and breathing hard when Jonathan rolled on top of him. Pressing his own cock - still wet and leaking - up against the firm of his belly as the kid kissed him breathless. Raspy with impatience and nerves before Jonathan surprised him by reaching down and cupping him through his sweats.

"You too? You want it-that? Do you-"

They were small, reverent words. More meaningful than he'd been told a man should be capable of. Unable to hide the fear and hope. It was a familiar expression. Something he figured had been clear as day on his face when he'd gone down on his knees. It was want, pure and simple.

Their lips brushed again before Jonathan angled down to nibble on his throat. Clumsy but this time with a hesitant, instinctual knowledge helping to string one act to another. Like the kid knew how it was *supposed* to go, how it was supposed to make someone feel, in theory, but had none of the practice behind it.

Practise he had in spades.

So, sue him, but he used it.

He pushed at Jonathan's shoulders until their stances flipped. Crowding him into the carpet and gripping handfuls of him as he followed the jut of the kid's breastbone with his cheek. Stealin' all that smooth warmth as Jonathan shivered underneath him. Cock already perking up, excited.

"You up for it?" he challenged playfully, pushing a thatch of that stupid hair back from his face with a grin.

Jonathan's eyes just burned.

It was official, he wasn't going to make it out of this alive.

He had Jonathan backed into the corner table of the dark room a couple days later - kissing him like their lives depended on it, when Nancy walked in on them.

There was about half a second of whining static. A period of time where he realized neither of them had actually jumped away from each other. Hell, they hadn't even *tried*. Meanwhile, he had his knee wedged between Jonathan's and his hand fisted in the kid's collar. Both of them half-hard from the kissing and gentle friction. Showing all the signs of having been mackin' on each other for a while as Jonathan's lips – plush and red-swollen - parted in surprise.

By the time he scraped together the brain cells to move, the gentle *oh-* that had left her when she'd first arrived had graduated to an arched brow and her hands pointedly sliding down to rest firmly on her hips.

For a long moment none of them said anything.

Hell, he was pretty sure Jonathan forgot to even *breathe*.

Heart thudding so loud against his that he had to hold himself back from making some crack about a heart-attack. Part of him starting to understand – if only in bits and pieces – as the look on Nancy's face stayed as it was. Unbothered, hopeful and wait- *vindicated?*

"Finally," Nancy hummed, after the long pause. Watching them indulgently – pleased – as Jonathan nearly keeled over in shock. Expression fish-tailing as he yanked his shirt straight. Trying and failing to cover the patch of humid-wet that stood out on the crotch of his jeans like the highlight of a newspaper headline. "I've been waiting for *months* for you guys to figure it out."

"You aren't mad?" Jonathan blurted, pale and shaky. Earnest and real, like he'd fully expected to lose them both the moment she'd stepped into the room. And now he wasn't sure what to do with himself when things seemed to be leaning in the opposite direction.

"No," she replied, smiling again. Full and gorgeous as always. Broaching the space so she could grab their hands in hers. Squeezing fiercely. "How could I? This is everything I've ever wanted since-

well, ever since everything happened. You two...you have *no idea* what you mean to me. How lucky I am to have found the two of you and that you were able to find each other when- God!"

She cut herself off, burbling a laugh as she went up on her tip-toes and pressed a kiss – more like an excited invitation than anything – across Jonathan's lips. Leaving the kid stunned and breathless as he watched her do the same with him.

He shook his head, running a hand through his hair as a smile started to make tracks.

Well, that conversation before New Years certainly made a lot more sense now.

Shit, he'd been a god damned idiot.

Not like that was new, but still.

Nance had known.

This whole damn time, she'd known all along.

He was about to say something – to inject some reality to her levity or maybe pinch himself to make sure he wasn't dreaming - when her expression sobered. Growing quietly serious as she looked off to the side, biting her lip like something had only just occurred to her.

"That is...as long as you have room for me?"

This time Jonathan beat him to it. God damned *bugling* out an indignant sound before stepping up and reaching out for her hand. Threading long, crooked fingers with her small neat ones. Tentative but growingly sure as she smiled up at him. Encouraging every single minute of it until Jonathan's cheeks practically *glowed* with a blush.

"What? Yes. Of course! Nancy, you're... it's the whole reason I started-"

He shut Jonathan up with a kiss. Mostly just because he could. Before pecking a hot one on Nancy and pulling her between them. Something soaring in his chest as he grinned widely. Feeling more at

ease with himself and the world than he had in months as Nancy snuggled in. Threading her arms between theirs as he caught Jonathan's eye over her head. Sharing something warm and heated that didn't need acknowledgement, before he answered her himself. Cocky as anything.

"It's the three of us or nothing, babe. Us against the world, remember?"

Author's Note:

Reference:

Eldritch: unearthly, alien, supernatural, weird, spooky, eerie.